



**STATE OF MONTANA
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
POLICY DIRECTIVE**

Policy No. DOC 4.5.15	Subject: OFFENDER HEALTH CARE ACCESS
Chapter 4: FACILITY/PROGRAM SERVICES	Page 1 of 2
Section 5: Health Care for Secure Facilities	Effective Date: Jan. 1, 1998
Signature: /s/ Bill Slaughter, Director	Revision Date: April 18, 2006

I. POLICY

The Department of Corrections facilities will provide offenders with access to medical, dental, and mental health services and, upon admission, inform them how to obtain these services during incarceration.

II. APPLICABILITY

The secure facilities that include Riverside and Pine Hills Youth Correctional Facilities, Montana State Prison, Montana Women's Prison, Treasure State Correctional Training Center, and the private and regional facilities contracted to the Department of Corrections.

III. REFERENCES

- A. *ACA Standards for Juvenile Correctional Facilities, 2003*
- B. *National Commission on Correctional Health Care Standards, 2003*

IV. DEFINITIONS

Access to Care – A system in which a patient is seen by a clinician in a timely manner, given an appropriate diagnosis, and receives the required care.

V. DEPARTMENT DIRECTIVES

A. Unreasonable Barriers

1. The facility will avoid creating unreasonable barriers to offender health care access. Examples of these barriers may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a. punishing offenders for seeking care for health needs;
 - b. assessing excessive co-payments that prevent or deter offenders from seeking care for health needs; and
 - c. deterring offenders from seeking care for health needs through unreasonable practices not related to legitimate facility needs, e.g., holding sick call at 2:00 a.m..

B. Health Care Services Information

1. Upon admission, the facility will inform the offender orally and in writing about:
 - a. how to access emergency and routine medical, dental, and mental health services;
 - b. the fee-for-service program, if one exists; and
 - c. the grievance process for health-related complaints.

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2. Facilities must ensure that offenders who may have difficulty communicating (e.g., foreign speaking, developmentally disabled, illiterate, mentally ill, deaf) understand how to access health care services.
3. Offenders will be offered information on how to obtain specific health care services at the following times:
 - a. at the time of the initial health assessment;
 - b. when an offender is receiving a particular service for the first time; and
 - c. on any other occasion when an offender displays a lack of understanding about how services are obtained.

C. Change in Procedures

1. Facilities must publish, or post in each housing unit, any procedural changes on how to obtain health care services prior to implementation.
2. Where applicable, facilities must update offender handbooks as necessary.

D. Requests for Health Care

1. Non-medical correctional staff may not approve or deny offender requests for health care attention.
2. Facilities must establish procedures to ensure that all offender health care requests are forwarded to the health care unit in a confidential manner.

VI. CLOSING

Questions concerning this policy should be directed to the health services bureau chief.